

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Special Meeting
October 1, 2025

A special meeting of the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee was held in the school cafeteria. The following members, staff and others were present:

Joseph M. Hall of Bellingham, Chair Zoom	Anthony E. Steele II, Superintendent-Director
Joseph A. Broderick of Blackstone	Michele S. Denise, Principal
Mark J. Potter of Douglas	Elise Bogdan, Recording Secretary
Edward D. Cray, III of Mendon	
Paul J. Braza of Milford	
Jan P. Hanratty of Millbury	
Gerald M. Finn of Millville, Vice Chair	
James M. Mitchell of Sutton	
Tyler D. Bartlett of Upton	
James H. Ebbeling of Uxbridge	

Members Absent:

Anthony M. Yitts of Grafton
Mitchell A. Intinarelli of Hopedale
Jeff T. Koopman of Northbridge

Item 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by the Chair, Mr. Hall, who was attending the meeting via Zoom. Mr. Steele was notified in advance that Mr. Yitts, Mr. Intinarelli, and Mr. Koopman would not be able to attend.

Item 2. Policy Subcommittee Presentation - Admissions Policy Revisions

At the request of the Policy Subcommittee, and for the benefit of all attendees, Superintendent Steele provided a background summary and rationale for a new admissions policy that complies with DESE's regulations and deadlines. The School Committee is well aware that the Policy Subcommittee met on September 9, 2025, and September 16, 2025, to review BVT's Admissions Policies (JF Student Admissions and JF-R School Admissions) during its public Policy Subcommittee meetings. The Department of Education requires BVT to produce a new admissions policy that complies with the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education regulations, which require a mandatory admissions lottery with a locally determined option for extra lottery weights. The new admissions policy requires a School Committee vote and is due to DESE by November 1, 2025. The Policy Subcommittee had lengthy discussions at its public meetings about the nuances of implementing a lottery admissions policy within the guidelines provided by DESE. With that input, the Policy Subcommittee presented a proposed draft Admissions Policy (POLICY: JF-ADMISSIONS), dated September 16, 2025, and distributed it during the regular School Committee meeting of September 18, 2025. At the time of the September 18, 2025, School Committee meeting, the shared draft Admissions Policy was still under review by legal counsel. Therefore, the Policy Subcommittee decided that it would be premature to seek a vote on a new Admissions Policy, given that legal counsel was still reviewing the proposed draft. At the request of the Policy

Subcommittee, the School Committee, during its regular meeting of September 18, 2025 voted unanimously (on motion by Mr. Intinarelli, seconded by Mr. Cray), to void and suspend BVT's Admissions Policies (JF Student Admissions and JF-R School Admissions) indefinitely with the understanding that a special meeting date would be forthcoming (on or around October 1, 2025) to seek a vote on a new proposed Admissions Policy (POLICY: JF-ADMISSIONS).

Superintendent Steele informed the School Committee that the legal counsel's review of the Policy Subcommittee's proposed draft Admissions Policy (POLICY: JF-ADMISSIONS), dated September 16, 2025, has been completed, and it's in front of you tonight at this special meeting.

Superintendent Steele shared with the School Committee that our attorney thoroughly reviewed the policy and found it to be very thoughtful and well done. However, when the state was implementing lottery admissions, it realized that it could become problematic in districts that do not have an apportionment system, as it could be very disruptive financially to the sending communities. And so, as a quick fix, DESE introduced the concept of local agreement, which essentially means that this term empowers the School Committee to define its apportionment system within its admissions policy. That's precisely what we did, as written on page 3. Our attorney acknowledged that we had a well-thought-out method, which seems extremely fair and considerate of all stakeholders. Our attorney did have one concern regarding the term 'local agreement' and DESE has not yet defined 'local agreement' in writing. We have heard verbally from Elizabeth Bennett, the Associate Deputy Commissioner in charge of CTE, as well as Pedro Martinez, the new Commissioner of Education, confirming the understood definition of local agreement. However, it is a relatively new term that was recently created to address this situation but has yet to be formally defined in writing. Our attorney has conversed with the DESE legal team to close that potential process concern.

Mr. Finn asked Superintendent Steele to describe the apportionment process. Mr. Steele briefly described the apportionment process, which begins on page three of the Admissions Policy (POLICY: JF-ADMISSIONS). Mr. Steele acknowledged that a lottery-based admissions process is not an ideal scenario but recognizes that the proposed apportionment system is a thoughtful and fair way to implement this mandated process by taking into account annual grade 9 capacity, the foundation ratio, prior enrollment trends, and a minimum seat allocation for each town. This process has been presented to area superintendents and is open to all suggestions for a perceived fairer method, provided the lottery remains in place. The Admissions Policy (POLICY: JF-ADMISSIONS) is the best possible product that meets compliance and treats member towns, schools, and the citizens of each of the thirteen sending towns fairly and with respect to cause the least disruption possible.

Item 3. Admissions Policy (Vote)

3. On the motion made by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Ebbeling, at the recommendation of the Policy Subcommittee, the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee unanimously voted to accept and adopt the Admissions Policy (POLICY: JF-ADMISSIONS), dated September 16, 2025, as presented at this special meeting,

held on October 1, 2025. This Admissions Policy, in response to a mandate from the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), complies with DESE regulations, 603 CMR 4.03(6). These regulations require a mandatory admissions lottery with a locally determined option for extra lottery weights. This Admissions Policy, approved by a majority vote of the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee, will take effect immediately and implement a lottery-based system for the 2026-2027 fall admissions cycle.

Item 4. Meeting Closure

4.1. The meeting was declared closed by the Chair, Mr. Hall at 6:29 p.m.

4.2. On a motion by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Braza, it was voted to adjourn at 6:29 p.m.

Listing of materials used in the meeting:

Item 2.a. Admissions Policy (Policy: JF – Admissions)

Item 3. Suggested Motion: Admissions Policy (Policy: JF – Admissions)

Respectfully submitted by,


Anthony M. Yitts, Secretary